

# Delta Gamma Well Aware

Encompasses eight dimensions: Social, Spiritual, Physical, Emotional, Vocational, Intellectual, Financial and Leadership Development



## Beware of Bee Stings



This summer, bees, wasps and hornets will all be buzzing around. While these insects are not usually aggressive, they will become so if their nests, hives or colonies are provoked. Make sure to protect yourself and beware of bee stings.

### SAFETY FIRST

- Keep all foods and beverages, particularly sugary ones, covered when outside to avoid attracting stinging insects.
- Walk away slowly, remain still or lie face down on the ground if one or a few stinging insects are bothering you. The face is the most likely place for a bee or wasp to sting. Do not flail your arms or swat at them as that may cause it to sting.
- If many insects are coming at you or you are being stung, cover your nose and mouth and move away quickly as you can usually outrun them. Bees release a chemical when they sting, alerting other bees to the intruder. More bees often follow, so go indoors or jump into water. Outdoors, a shaded area is better than an open area to get away from the insects.
- Cover the body as much as possible with clean clothing and bathe daily; sweat angers bees.
- If a bee comes inside your vehicle, slowly stop the car and open all of the windows, allowing the bee to fly out.
- Social wasps thrive in places where people discard food, so clean up picnic areas, grills and other outdoor eating areas.
- Strong scents, such as perfumes, scented soaps and deodorants, may increase the risk of insect stings. Also, avoid bananas and banana-scented toiletries.
- There is no evidence that wearing bright colors or flowery patterns attracts stinging insects; dark colors may attract them more so wear light colored, smooth finished clothing.
- Avoid flowering plants.
- Check for new nest during the warmer hours of the day during July, August and September when bees are very active; Have any nests close to your residence removed professionally.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE STUNG

- Have someone stay with the victim to be sure they do not have an allergic reaction.
- Honeybees are the only bees that leave their stingers behind; remove the stinger as quickly as possible because it continues to inject venom for up to one minute, even if the bee is dead.
- It is important to remove the stinger as quickly and gently as possible. It should be removed using a four x four inch gauze wiped over the area or by scraping a fingernail over the area.
- Never squeeze the stinger or use tweezers as it will cause more venom to enter the skin and injure the muscle.
- Wash the area with soap and water and immediately apply ice to reduce pain and swelling. Cortisone creams, anti-inflammatory drugs (i.e. – ibuprofen) and antihistamines (i.e. – Benadryl) may help with pain and itching.
- Home remedies such as ammonia, menthol, baking soda paste, colloidal oatmeal and calamine lotion may also bring relief.
- Do not scratch the sting as this will cause the site to swell and itch more, increasing the chance of infection.
- Your doctor may prescribe an oral corticosteroid drug if you have a severe reaction.
- Do not break the blisters that develop from fire ant stings; simply clean them with soap and water.

## IF YOU ARE ALLERGIC

- Minor allergic reactions include local redness, swelling (hard lump), itching and pain that lasts anywhere from a few hours to a few days.
- About 5% of people may have a dangerous and potentially life-threatening (anaphylactic) allergic reaction to insect stings.
  - Symptoms may include hives, nausea, vomiting, wheezing, dizziness, faintness, irregular heartbeat, swelling of the tongue and throat, difficulty breathing and a rapid drop in blood pressure that can lead to shock.
  - The reaction generally occurs within minutes of being stung but can also occur hours later.
  - Anyone who has had this type of reaction in the past to an insect sting, even if they are stung again and do not have it, should go to an emergency room or call 911 right away.
  - An allergist or immunologist can help to prevent a future reaction by the following methods:
    1. A prescription for an emergency kit with auto-injectable epinephrine (EpiPen) that should always be carried and used immediately if stung.
    2. A medic-alert bracelet when outside during bee season.

3. Venom immunotherapy, which is a series of vaccines that gradually desensitize you to the insect's venom. It takes three to five years or longer to complete but is nearly 100% effective.

### **Wellness Resources**

*UC, Berkeley Wellness Letter*, August 2006

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

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